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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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1. Routes

The two principal routes for freight trains leaving Berlin for the USRR are through Kustrin to Wystruc (Insterburg) and through Frankfurt/Oder to Brest-Litovsk. At the present time about 90 percent of the traffic goes over the latter route. The railroad bridge at Frankfurt/Oder has been rebuilt as a permanent bridge with steel girders on concrete supports and has a maximum load capacity of 1200 tons. At present there is only one track, of normal gauge, over the bridge, but there is room for a second track to be installed later. Trains crossing the bridge are restricted to a maximum speed of 10 kilometers per hour. The normal gauge tracks continue through Poland to the freight yards outside Brest-Litovsk, and one such track (probably dating from the time of the German occupation) is said to extend as far as Odessa.

2. German Crews

The German crew of such a freight train, known as a "brigade", consists of three engineers, three firemen, two conductors, two brakemen, and one inspector (Wagenmeister). The brigade is attached to a certain locomotive, which must never be left unattended and which must be returned to the place of origin regardless of condition. Thus, if an engine breaks down at Brest-Litovsk, it is brought back by another train, or, in the case of several defective engines, one locomotive will haul in all the defective ones. The German crew members are housed in a special car, usually right behind the engine, with sleeping and toilet facilities. One conductor and one brakeman ride in the caboose, while the Wagenmeister, who is responsible for the freight, inspects all the cars at every stop. Should a seal be broken either through shaking loose or through attempted robbery, the inspector must report it to the Russian train commander, who in turn stops the train at the next station and has the Polish stationmaster affix a new seal. In case of a hot box or engine trouble, the train simply slows down till it reaches the next station, where emergency repairs are made. Regardless of condition, neither the engine nor any car may be removed from the train, which must reach its destination as originally composed. All members of the German railroad brigade are required to bring their own food supplies for the entire trip (both ways).

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3. Russian Guards

Depending on the value of the freight, the Russian guard force usually consists of from six to twelve men under a sergeant, who also acts as train commander. The guards are distributed in three cars on the train, i.e. one car behind the engine, one in the center, and one at the rear of the train. The front and the rear cars are usually shared with the German crews. The guards, who are armed with pistols, rifles, and tommy guns, make free use of their weapons whenever suspected pilferers approach the train at unexpected stops in Poland.

4. Freight

Since the beginning of the year only two freight trains a day have been leaving for the USSR because of bad traffic conditions in Poland. These freight trains usually consist of from 60 to 65 cars and carry every conceivable kind of freight, such as valuable manufactured articles, cement, sugar, scrap metal, etc. However, the freight slips glued to the cars do not always show the real contents of the cars. For instance, what is labeled cement is usually sugar. Since last October 50 percent of all the freight shipped to the USSR over this route has consisted of sugar.

5. The Trip through Poland

The most hazardous stretch of the entire journey is through Poland. Since the Poles are well aware that these trains haul valuable freight for the USSR, there is constant danger of sabotage. Polish partisans appear to have become more active recently. The other great risk in Poland is pilferage. If the train for some reason has to slow down, pilferers jump onto the train and start throwing goods out of the cars to be picked up later. Skirmishes between bands of pilferers and the Russian guards are not infrequent occurrences on these trips.

6. Brest-Litovsk

These freight trains always cross the Bug into USSR territory and are then uncoupled either in Brest-Litovsk or in a freight yard about 20 kilometers beyond it. Sometimes the stops here last only a few hours and sometimes several days. On the return trip to Germany the trains usually consist of empty cars.

7. Blue Trains

The so-called Blue Train is the daily train from Berlin to Moscow. Last Christmas Eve the press reported the wrecking of this train just outside of Warsaw. Actually the train was derailed by sabotage, and 65 Russians were killed and about an equal number injured. As of 1 January 1949 Russian personnel going on leave or returning to the USSR must board the Blue Train at Frankfurt/Oder. The train then by-passes Warsaw.

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